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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001033

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA MARKINGS)

FROM THE AMBASSADOR TO ADM STAVRIDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2019
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MOPS, MASS, NATO, TU
SUBJECT: YOUR VISIT TO TURKEY

REF: A. ANKARA 78
B. SECDEF 111500Z JUN09

Classified By: Ambassador James R. Jeffrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Admiral Stavridis: Welcome to Turkey. Your trip will underscore Turkey's status as an essential Ally in every existing NATO operation and in what we seek to accomplish in this region.

2. (C) Issues to Raise:

-- Turkey's primary security focus remains its counter-insurgency effort against the PKK. This operation, which is becoming a broader whole-of-government effort, overshadows other issues and limits the resources Turkey could devote to other tasks.

-- U.S. provision of actionable intelligence: Remains vital for Turkey's anti-PKK operations and has helped turn around U.S.-Turkey relations. The Turks will express appreciation for this assistance, but will push for more direct U.S. military action to "break" the PKK.

-- Aegean issues: May be on GEN Basbug's agenda. You should encourage him to avoid provocative actions and express support for confidence building activities and direct Turkey-Greece engagement to address the wider set of Aegean issues.

-- Black Sea: Basbug will likely want to stress Turkey's desire not to see a return of Cold War dynamics between the US and NATO on one side and Russia on the other.

Watch Out For

- Basbug pressing for direct U.S. milops against PKK (para 3);
- Stark warnings about NATO participation in Aegean exercises that are perceived as endorsing Greek claims in the Aegean (e.g. Noble Archer - para 7-8);
- Request to speed up approval and delivery of attack helicopters and armed UAVs (para 15);
- Turkish threats if the U.S. uses "genocide" to refer to the tragic events of 1915 (para 11);
- Complaints about lack of NATO-EU cooperation (para. 14).

PKK

3. (C) President Bush's November 2007 decision to share operational intelligence against the PKK with Turkey was a turning point for the bilateral relationship. President Obama's declaration, in his speech to the Turkish Parliament,

of our continuing commitment to support Turkey's fight against the PKK was warmly welcomed. Our work together has made it difficult for PKK terrorists to use northern Iraq as a safe haven. Operational success has allowed Turkey's counter-insurgency effort against the PKK to evolve in the past year and expand beyond military action alone. The government has increased social and economic support to ethnic Kurds in southeast Turkey, has broadened the rights of Kurds to use their own language and increased educational opportunities as well. Turkey is developing a new government structure to provide leadership and oversight to the "whole of government" approach to counter the PKK, an approach explicitly endorsed by GEN Basbug. We are pleased that Turks are consulting with us to this end. Still, most of the focus remains on the effort to attack PKK terrorists using military force. The TGS is skeptical about the effectiveness of the U.S.-Iraq-Turkey trilateral intelligence sharing cell established in Erbil in June and believes direct U.S. milops against the PKK, or at the very least, significant U.S. pressure on the KRG to take more direct action to isolate the PKK is essential to "break the back of the PKK" before the U.S. fully withdraws from Iraq. Basbug will also argue that he needs continued intel sharing and direct US kinetic operations to justify TGS support for social and political steps to address underlying Kurdish political issues. We recommend you push back on his requests for direct U.S. action and confirm our commitment to maintain intelligence sharing while urging the military to continue to support the whole-of-government approach that is essential to an enduring solution to the Kurdish question.

IRAQ

4. (C) Turkey's engagement with Iraq has done much to help further Iraq's development as a sovereign state. President Gul visited Iraq in March 2009, the first Turkish president to visit in 35 years. Turkey was essential in our push to get the Iraqi parliament to approve our Security Agreement and remains a key sustainment hub. Turkey signed a low-level mil-to-mil agreement with Iraq in early June, allowing for officer exchanges and training. The Turks have excellent relations with all the Iraqi political players. Turkey will not consider any alternative to the political unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, but has in the past six months become much more flexible to how it engages "the local administration/authorities of northern Iraq" (how Turkey refers officially to the KRG).

5. (C) Habur Gate and the Incirlik Cargo Hub have been vital to our sustainment operations. They could be helpful in our

drawdown as well. Minister of National Defense Vecdi Gonul suggested that Turkey was ready to agree to increased use of Incirlik for this purpose when he met with Secretary Gates on June 3. Using the surface route from Habur Gate to Turkey's Mediterranean ports is worth exploring as well, but here the rough terrain, the security environment and the cantankerous Turkish government bureaucracy could challenge any U.S. operation. We are already working with CENTCOM logisticians to evaluate these options.

Afghanistan/Pakistan

6. (C) At the last NATO summit, Turkey pledged a significant increase in their troop, training and financial commitments to Afghanistan (reassuming command of RC-Capital, adding three Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams in Kabul and an additional PRT, and sending four teams to the North for election support). Two Turkish officers deployed to Mazar-e-Sharif as part of the Election Support Force were killed (two others were seriously injured) in an accident on July 15. You may want to extend your condolences to GEN Basbug for this loss. Turkey cites as one of its main advantages the ability to use its "soft power" to support our goals in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, building on the trust gained from its shared cultural and historical heritage. We couldn't agree more. During his May 18 meeting in Istanbul and again on June 1 in Washington, Ambassador Holbrooke asked Turkey to step up its diplomatic, political, economic/reconstruction, and military training activities with both countries (Turkey also has established a trilateral Turkey-Afghan-Pakistan mechanism and the last summit in April in Ankara brought together the three countries' presidents, military chiefs of staff, and intel chiefs) in close coordination with the US. Holbrooke also stressed the value of Turkey sharing its counter-insurgency experience with Pakistan, given strong Turkey-Pakistan ties.

Aegean

7. (C) The overflight of a NATO AWACS over Agios Efstratios -- an island Turkey believes is demilitarized (ref a) -- during the Noble Archer exercise in December 2008 incensed Turkey. GEN Basbug called NATO's decision to allow its assets to fly over an island whose militarization status is under dispute "a mistake", and warned that it must not happen again. GEN Craddock subsequently gave him assurances that NATO would not repeat such activities. The Turkish military showed its displeasure by increasing fighter overflights of

what Turkey views as areas of disputed status in the Aegean -- including low-level flights over the populated islets of Agathonisi and Farmakonisi. We have warned both the government and the military that these flights are provocative, dangerous and counterproductive and have urged both Turkey and Greece to accelerate their negotiations to achieve a settlement of the complex of issues related to the Aegean. You should be cognizant that both Greece and Turkey have been guilty of inviting NATO to participate in exercises which are designed with the explicit goal of having NATO endorse, through its participation, the parochial views of Athens or Ankara. NATO's consolidation of CAOCs for the region to a single point in Larissa, Greece, and agreement for a Turkish officer to take shared command is a historic and positive development, and will need the goodwill on both sides to make this work. GEN Basbug, during his June 3 meeting with ASD Vershbow (ref b), had already indicated a likely need for external assistance to ensure that this transition improves rather than exacerbates tensions in the Aegean.

8. (C) You could help defuse tensions in the Aegean by:

- Invoking the Luns Doctrine and making clear that NATO is not in the business of taking sides in disputes between Allies;
- Urging the two sides to take real steps to dial down tensions, including Turkey's cessation of flights over populated Greek islands and development of a mutually acceptable code of conduct regarding flights in the Aegean;
- Voicing support for the two Allies to accelerate efforts to resolve the broader dispute over claims in the Aegean (from the delineation of national airspace and waters to demarcation of the Flight Information Region, to determining the limits of the continental shelf in the Aegean).

Caucasus

9. (C) Turkey has taken important steps toward opening its closed border with Armenia. This issue is politically charged on both sides, is linked to the 1915 "genocide" issue (a word which you should avoid at all costs), but is also viewed by the Turks as linked to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan (We recognize the political imperative in Turkey for both processes to proceed simultaneously, but our policy is in public to describe NK and Turkey-Armenia as independent "parallel processes," and we encourage the Turks to do the same).

Black Sea

10. (C) Turkey views the Black Sea as its backyard, and not without cause (it has the longest coastline among the littoral states and the Montreux Convention gives Turkey control of the "Turkish Straits" and requires Black Sea states to report annually the status of their naval forces there). It jealously guards the Montreux Convention as one of the sources of stability for not only Turkey but the entire region. Turkish officials frequently remind us that it is imperative for them to remain a consistent and honest broker in implementing the Convention's provisions, and that Russia closely monitors activities in the Straits to make sure that the letter of the Convention is being honored. Turkey has also resisted NATO and U.S. efforts to play a larger role in the Black Sea, in part out of a desire to remain the key player in the Black Sea and in part due to fear of Russian reactions. Having said that, the Turks have shown flexibility with notification requirements to support U.S. requirements, including during the August 2008 crisis in Georgia.

Iran

11. (C) With a seat on the UN Security Council and another at the IAEA Board of Governors, Turkey's support in international diplomacy is essential to our success. Turkey shares our concern about Iran's nuclear ambitions, but is hesitant to use harsh language in public statements which it believes could close the door to dialogue and limit its unusual access to the Iranian leadership (and potential Iranian economic deals). Nevertheless, they are a strong partner in our non-proliferation efforts, with several significant results. Politically, Turkey supports the "international consensus" as expressed in UNSC resolutions and, if pressed, the Turks tend to slant toward us.

Missile Defense

12. (C) Turkey's mistrust of the Iranians is historic and is reflected in its tender for high, medium and low altitude air defense systems. The Patriot system is the leading contender, but the Russians and Chinese are also in the competition. Turkey supports an Alliance missile defense capability, but have emphasized the "indivisibility of Alliance security" (read: it must also cover us) in missile defense discussions at NATO. If raised, you should note the importance for Turkey to ensure interoperability with any

potential future system or network of systems as both the U.S. and NATO are in the process of reviewing missile defense options.

Counter Piracy

13. (C) Turkey is a member of the Contact Group on Somali Piracy, commands CTF-151, and has two frigates deployed to the region. Turkey supports deployment of NATO's maritime group to the area and has pledged an additional naval vessel to deploy with this group. One problem is its opposition to Cyprus membership in the anti-piracy group. A Turkish cargo ship was hijacked on July 8, with 23 Turkish crew aboard. The ship remains under the control of pirates.

NATO-EU

14. (C) Turkey is frustrated by the ongoing stalemate in NATO-EU relations, recognizes the need for improved relations between these organizations, particularly in Afghanistan and Kosovo, but blames the EU and believes that NATO should adhere to the Agreed Framework in its relations with the EU. Since 2007, Turkey has asked the EU to give it status within the European Defense Agency (EDA) commensurate to Norway (another non-EU NATO Ally) and conclude an information security agreement so that Turkey can receive classified EU documents. To date, the EU has been unresponsive (the Turks believe this is due to a block by Cyprus). Unless there is movement from the EU on these requests, the best we can hope for is that Turkey continues to allow on-the-ground coordination between NATO and EU staff.

UAVs and Attack Helicopters

15. (C) Turkey seeks to acquire, on an urgent basis, its own UAV capability to be able to continue anti-PKK ops without US assistance. The administration has made clear that we support this goal in principle, and Turkey has pending requests to acquire armed Predator and Reaper UAVs. Provided these sales win Congressional approval, the delivery pipeline for these systems is long, and Turkey's leaders have sought reassurance that we will not pull our intel support until they can replace it. Bad procurement decisions led Turkey to a severe shortage of attack helicopters, desperately needed for its fight against the PKK. Turkey has looked to us to help them bridge this capability gap, asking to purchase additional AH-1W Super Cobra aircraft. These aircraft are in

short supply in our own inventory, but Secretary Gates and VCJCS Cartwright have found a way to support this request within a few years (four each in 2011, 2012 and 2013), the best we can do.

Political Environment

16. (C) PM Erdogan's Islamist-leaning Justice and Development (AK) Party's parliamentary majority is solid and the opposition is fractured, but Erdogan lost some ground in March local elections. Civilian - military relations remain tense and complex. CHOD Basbug has worked out a modus vivendi with PM Erdogan, but the long-running struggle between Turkey's secularists (with the military their fer-de-lance) and Islamists (represented by the government) naturally puts them at odds. Erdogan has the upper hand, a fact that Basbug seems to have learned to live with. Alleged military involvement in coup contingency planning or even deliberate generation of internal chaos preoccupies both the military and civilian leadership. A recent law allowing civilian courts to try military officials has stirred up tensions further and has created enormous pressure on Basbug to respond more forcefully to what many in the military view as provocation from the government. Basbug, to his great credit, has resisted this pressure.

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JEFFREY